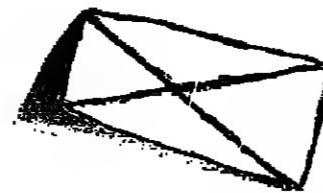


Mourners renew allegiance to Assad

DAMASCUS (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of people poured into the streets of Damascus on Tuesday to renew their allegiance to their president, Hafez Al Assad, and express their grief over the death of his eldest son 11 days ago. Bassel Assad, 31, who had been killed as his father's likely successor, was killed in a car accident Jan. 21 and buried the next day in the family's hometown of Qardaha, in northwestern Syria. The Syrian president, who had been receiving condolences in Qardaha, was then back in the capital Tuesday and the Damascus headquarters of his Baath Party called for a mass rally to greet him. Officials refused to say when the president would arrive in Damascus, and the three-hour parade ended without an appearance by Mr. Assad at the Omayyad Square, in the heart of the city, where the state media said 1.5 million people had gathered. Other senior government officials, led by vice-president Abdul Halim Khaddam and Zuhair Masaqqa, as well as Abdallah Al Ahmar, the assistant secretary-general of ruling Arab Baath Socialist Party, took part in the rally. Church bells tolled and loudspeakers atop mosque minarets blared verses from the Koran as the procession got under way.



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King receives cable from Hirawi

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday received a cable from Lebanese President Elias Hirawi offering condolences over the assassination in Beirut of Jordanian diplomat Nayeb Imran Maaytah. Mr. Hirawi stressed that his country denounced "acts of violence and rejects any attempt to undermine the good and brotherly relations between Lebanon and Jordan or to tamper with the security and stability in Lebanon." Mr. Hirawi said he had requested the Lebanese authorities concerned to coordinate with the Jordanian authorities to uncover the identity of the assassins of Mr. Maaytah.

Arrow missile could be launched this year

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel plans to launch by the end of the year a U.S.-funded missile designed to intercept ballistic missiles such as the Scuds fired by Iraq in the Gulf war, an Israeli official said on Tuesday. If successful, the Arrow 2 could become the first weapon developed specifically to counter Scuds. "The plan now is by the end of this year to launch the Arrow 2, which is now in an advanced stage of development," said the official. But the Arrow 2 must first overcome technical glitches that have plagued its troubled predecessor Arrow 1, whose disappointing tests prompted U.S. calls for the project's cancellation.

Ecuador envoy named rights commissioner

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Ecuador's U.N. envoy, Jose Ayala Lasso, was named Tuesday to fill the newly created post of U.N. high commissioner for human rights, first proposed more than 45 years ago.

Mr. Ayala Lasso, by Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, is virtually certain to be endorsed by the General Assembly.

Envoy says Cyprus rivals accept steps

NICOSIA (R) — A United Nations envoy said Tuesday the opposing sides in divided Cyprus had accepted in principle U.N.-proposed confidence building measures. "The next step will be to inform the (U.N.) secretary general of all these developments and then the secretary general will convey his views and suggestions on how we move on," U.N. Resident Representative Gustave Feissel told reporters after an hour-long meeting with Cyprus President Glafcos Clerides. "I'm sure that one of the key elements is that we move on speedily. Time is important, so that we can get along... with the main purpose of the whole business which is to reach an overall settlement," he added.

Court upholds Pan Am awards

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal appeals court has upheld jury awards to three relatives of people killed aboard Pan Am flight 103, the jetliner shredder in the skies over Scotland. The ruling Monday could result in the bankruptcy but insured U.S. airlines paying out hundreds of millions of dollars on 222 other claims.

The court of appeals for the second circuit voted two to one to uphold damages totaling nearly \$19 million, awarded in 1992 by a jury in U.S. district court in Brooklyn. The jury found that Pan American World Airways failed to prevent the bomb from being placed aboard the plane. The December 1988 explosion over Lockerbie, Scotland, killed 270 people.

U.S. central bank vice-chairman resigns

WASHINGTON (R) — The Federal Reserve Board announced on Wednesday that Vice-Chairman David Mullins was resigning from the central bank's board effective on Feb. 14. His unexpected departure gives President Bill Clinton a key second appointment to make to the Federal Reserve's board. The board said in an announcement Mr. Mullins would become a partner in a recently-formed investment management firm.

Arafat ready to sign accord, but Israel scales down hopes

Combined agency dispatches

PALESTINIAN leader Yasser Arafat said Tuesday he was ready to sign immediately an agreement reached with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on launching Palestinian autonomy.

But Israel said more time was needed to reach accord on its first troop pullout from the occupied territories.

Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres drew up a draft accord in talks in Davos, Switzerland, last weekend which has to be approved by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Mr. Arafat told a news conference at U.N. headquarters in Geneva that he was ready to sign the deal "immediately" but Israel had asked for a week to study it.

He and Mr. Peres, who are to meet again in Cairo Sunday, had agreed that it became known as the "Davos agreement."

"The withdrawal should begin immediately after the signature of the implementation agreement," Mr. Arafat said.

He warned that delays in signing it endangered the peace process.

Mr. Arafat, who was speaking after addressing the U.N. Human Rights Commission, added: "I hope I will be able to go to Gaza and Jericho as soon as the Israelis withdraw."

He said: "I did not want to get involved in drawing up an agreement hastily in Davos, I preferred to consult with the prime minister, for every word is important."

Mr. Rabin has the last word on the autonomy accord, and on Monday studied the draft drawn up in Switzerland during the Peres-Arafat talks.

"There has been progress but there are still issues and items that have to be worked out," Gad Ben-Ari, spokesman for Mr. Rabin, said in occupied Jerusalem.

"It's going to take some time," he added.

Other Israeli officials said it would take weeks to hammer out an accord.

Mr. Arafat said he hoped to sign an agreement with Mr. Peres, in Cairo next week.

Mr. Ben-Ari said such a meeting was possible but nothing was scheduled as yet and there were no plans for a signing ceremony.

His comments contrasted with a downbeat view from Mr. Peres, who told Israeli radio from Washington: "A lot more time and patience are needed, but I remain convinced that we can reach a comprehensive agreement, without committing myself to any date."

"I did not want to get involved in drawing up an agreement hastily in Davos, I preferred to consult with the prime minister, for every word is important."

Peres: PLO does not want a state

ISRAELI FOREIGN Minister Shimon Peres said Tuesday Yasser Arafat had told him he was not trying to build a Palestinian state but a confederation with Jordan.

Mr. Peres quoted Mr. Arafat as telling him and senior aides at a meeting on Saturday night in Davos:

"I know I did not sign (an agreement on) an independent state but on self-government. Secondly I want you to know that we have a decision not to go in the direction of a Palestinian state but to go in the direction of confederation with Jordan whatever Jordan's position will be."

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On Monday, Mr. Peres told a Jewish group in Florida he still expected an accord early this year. The withdrawal was due to have begun on Dec. 13. Mr. Sarid said it could still be completed by an April 13 deadline.

Israeli media said army chief Ehud Barak had reservations about concessions. Mr. Peres made no security, but Mr. Beilin said negotiators would not put Israeli security at risk and the compromises were for the most part symbolic.

Israel's daily *Yediot Aharonot* reported that military chiefs, including Gen. Barak, felt that Israel was making too many concessions over security, "which could make the army's task of protecting Israeli civilians in the territories much more difficult."

Israeli negotiator Yossi Sarid said that even if they solved one of the problems, such as control of border crossings, there would still be substantial areas to be negotiated.

Ahmad Tibi, an Arab adviser to Mr. Arafat, said the problem was that Mr. Rabin did not back the agreements reached in Switzerland.

"It seems that the head of the government... did not give his approval to matters that the Israeli delegation had earlier approved," Mr. Tibi told Israel Radio.

PLO chief negotiator Nahil Shaath said Monday that the two sides "managed to resolve all problems concerning Gaza, Jericho and the crossing points," but added: "I don't want to be too optimistic, because stumbling blocks sometimes emerge for reasons beyond our control."

A member of the Israeli delegation in talks with the PLO said: "We are still in negotiations."

(Continued on page 5)

A bedouin woman guards her flock next to the site of Nabi Mousa (tomb of Moses, seen in the background). The holy site is one of the points of

discussion between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in their autonomy negotiations (AFP photo)

Saleh wants signing in Amman

SANA (AP) — President Ali Abdullah Saleh has turned down an Arab League offer to host in Cairo the signing of a national reconciliation charter to end his feud with Vice-President Ali Salem Al Beedh.

Mr. Saleh said he preferred King Hussein's offer to hold the signing ceremony in Amman, the official Yemen news agency SABA, reported Monday.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Salem Bassindawh conveyed Mr. Saleh's regrets to Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid, according to SABA.

It said members of the dialogue committee which drew up the charter wanted the ceremony in Amman. It is expected to be held on Feb. 6 or 7, although a date has not officially been announced.

(See related story on page 10)

Ekeus offers no clue to plan to lift sanctions on Iraq

BAHRAIN (Agencies) — Chief U.N. weapons inspector Robert Ekeus said Tuesday that Iraq was cooperating on a plan to monitor its weapons capabilities, but he would not say when an embargo on Iraqi oil sales should be lifted.

Mr. Ekeus said any recommendation for the lifting of the embargo depended on "how things happen on a day to day basis and how things are working."

He added, however, that "...the impression from our experts is that things are going very well, so, we'd like to encourage Iraq to continue on that line... It's deeds (that count)."

The United Nations imposed an economic blockade on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and occupied the emirate for seven months.

Before Iraq can again sell oil, its main source of foreign exchange, the U.N. Special Commission must certify to the Security Council that Iraq has fulfilled its obligations to declare and destroy prohibited weapons and accept their long-term monitoring.

Last November, Iraq reversed its previous position and acknowledged U.N. Re-

(Continued on page 5)

Bomb explodes at Zarqa cinema; at least two injured

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A bomb exploded at a movie theatre showing a soft pornographic film in Zarqa on Tuesday, injuring two people, one of them seriously, police and eyewitnesses said. The blast occurred only six days after a similar explosion at a downtown Amman movie house.

But, he said, "there is no evidence of any group responsible for the two incidents."

Some of the witnesses who saw the damage inside the theatre said that the projection room wall had a large hole, equipment was demolished, parts of ceiling had come down and the last rows of chairs were dislodged — features almost identical to the post-blast scene at the Rivoli.

Mr. Majali's injuries were mostly on the lower half of his body, particularly his legs, witnesses said. Mr. Saeed appeared to have hurt himself by tripping himself while trying to get out of the cinema in panic after the blast, they said.

Both were rushed to the military hospital in Zarqa, an industrial city 20 kilometres northeast of Amman.

Police cordoned off the area, which also houses two other movie theatres. No fire was triggered by the blast.

Jordanian censorship regulations ban pornographic and X-rated movies, but a few theatres have always managed to elude the authorities. Many of them have records of being fined and asked to close down for a few days.

Both the Rivoli and Salwa explosions were caused by crude homemade bombs similar in nature to devices discovered at other places in the past, including liquor stores.

Bashir Al Majali, deputy police chief of Zarqa, said the explosion was caused by a bomb similar to the one that went off at Amman's Rivoli theatre on Jan. 16. The Rivoli was showing a semi-

pornographic Turkish film when the bomb tore through the street level movie house.

This seems to be a repetition of the Amman blast; the same method and the same kind of bomb," he told reporters, adding that the device was placed near the projection room as the case was with the Rivoli incident.

But, he said, "there is no evidence of any group responsible for the two incidents."

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This pointed the finger in the direction of religious extremists who oppose what they consider to be socially and culturally improper movies for a conservative society.

An explosion more than a year ago at a cinema in the Baq

Israeli government kills health reform

TEL AVIV (AP) — A reform effort appeared to fizzle Monday when the cabinet withdrew a health insurance bill under pressure from the country's entrenched socialist institutions.

"Today, in effect, the government buried health insurance," Health Minister Haim Ramon told Israel Radio after the decision. He said he would resign at the next cabinet meeting Tuesday.

The health plan, like one being drawn up by the Clinton administration, aimed at guaranteeing citizens basic medical services regardless of income or employment status and making health care more costly for the young and healthy and less expensive for the sick and elderly.

Its demise was a personal defeat for Mr. Ramon, a leader of the governing Labour party's free market-oriented young guard, as well as a setback for efforts to reform beleaguered but still dominant socialist holdovers from Zionism's early days.

The right-wing Likud charged Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who avidly supported health reform in his 1992 electoral campaign, betrayed voters by giving in to vested interests in his party.

Mr. Ramon's proposal, which earlier this month easily passed the first of three needed approvals in parliament, requires Israelis to pay a health tax of 4.9 per cent of their income — about \$650 per working person annually.

Most people currently pay a similar amount to various "sick funds" — plans that run clinics and in some cases fund hospitalisation. But none are required to accept all applicants, and an estimated 350,000 Israelis are uninsured.

Under Mr. Ramon's plan the government would distribute the tax revenue among the clinics in a way that would favour the most needy, said health ministry spokeswoman Rachel Bluestein.

The main opposition came from the Histadrut, the trade union federation that represents 60 per cent of the two million-member work force and owns Kupat Holim Clalit, the largest health plan but one that relies heavily on government subsidies to stay afloat.

Mr. Rabin's turnaround drew almost unanimous media criticism characterised by the Ma'ariv daily's editorial entitled "The dinosaurs' victory." A cartoon in the Jerusalem Post showed government leaders interrupting a transfusion and shouting: "Hold it — I believe he's not a member of the Histadrut."

Arab boycott of Israel looks shaky but to stay

By Yousef Azmeh
Reuter

DUBAI — The Arab boycott of Israel may look shaky under heavy U.S. pressure but officials and diplomats in the region say it is unlikely to crumble until Israel withdraws from occupied Arab lands.

The 40-year boycott of Israel and firms with strong links to it is fraying at the edges.

The Gulf state of Qatar is talking to Israel about possible gas supplies.

Kuwait has eased some of the boycott rules to attract U.S. firms whose expertise is needed for its reconstruction.

And illicit trade is rife between the Jewish state and some of its Arab neighbours.

But the boycott, a highly emotive issue for many Arabs, remains official policy and a review by Arab League foreign ministers in March is likely to back Syrian demands that it should stay in force pending a final settlement with Israel.

"We should not speak of removing the boycott while Israel is still occupying Arab

members must be dues-paying Histadrut members — a source of guaranteed income for the union that Mr. Ramon's bill would have eliminated.

Mr. Ramon's critics maintained that ending subsidies to Kupat Holim Clalit and undercutting Histadrut funding could kill both.

Mr. Ramon argues the union, a pillar of the Zionist movement, had become a bloated and self-serving bureaucracy. Through ownership of various industries, he contended, the Histadrut blurs the line between representing workers and employing them.

At a party congress called Monday to approve Histadrut functionaries who will form the bulk of active Labour members, Mr. Ramon predicted the party will lose votes because of its association with the widely unpopular union.

Mr. Rahin argued that he could not leave the Histadrut without funding.

The congress called on the government to amend the bill to divert part of the health tax revenue to the Histadrut and enshrine in law the linkage between health coverage and union dues.

Economy Minister Amnon Rubinstein, who voted against what he termed "the Bolshevik proposal" in the cabinet, said he expected intentions to submit a revised bill to face away because it stood little chance of passing in parliament.

Agriculture Minister Yaakov Tsur maintained Israel's health care was exemplary. "We must reform without destroying what we have," he said.

The Likud, meanwhile, announced plans to submit to parliament its own health reform bill identical to Mr. Ramon's original. That would embarrass most Labour legislators who supported the plan initially.

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FAX TO GOD: The Israeli Bezek phone company's delivery man squeezes messages sent by fax on the western wall in occupied Jerusalem. As the one-year-old Bezek operation permits the delivery of messages land everyday at the site Hundreds of messages land everyday at the site (AFP photo)

Iran, hit by economic woes, celebrates revolution

By Alex Efti
The Associated Press

TEHRAN — With lights and decorations, Iranians began a week of celebrations Monday to mark the 15th anniversary of the Islamic Republic.

Behind the festivities, though, were fears that an economic crisis was threatening the republic's survival.

President Hashemi Rafsanjani called the 1979 Islamic revolution, which toppled Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and inaugurated Muslim fundamentalist rule, was "the greatest transformation in the world this century."

The Iranian capital was festively lit and festooned with bunting and posters hailing the revolution and its spiritual leader, the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Concerts, sporting events and fireworks displays were planned.

But the fanfare will do little to cheer the many Iranians forced to work one or two extra jobs to make ends meet as rampant inflation eats into their paychecks.

Iran's oil-dependent economy has suffered tremendously in recent months amid a collapse in world oil prices, stripping the state of revenues used to maintain welfare subsidies and modernise rusting state industries.

Economic mismanagement has also saddled Iran with a foreign debt estimated to exceed \$30 billion and sparked murmuring of public discontent.

Many politicians and media have been outspoken in their criticism of the government's economic policies.

The economic crisis "is bound to have political implications," said Sadeq Sami, a Tehran publisher. "This is bound to happen to any government that cannot satisfy its people."

Rajeei Khorassani, a parliamentary deputy and former ambassador to the United Nations, conceded there was popular dissatisfaction.

"People have every right to want to change the government, but I don't believe people have lost faith in the ideals of the revolution," he said.

"We should be able to feed our people... the country is extremely rich. The reason we haven't been able to do so is mainly due to mismanagement. If the right people are chosen for the right job we shouldn't have any problem," he said, without naming names.

The open criticism of the

government is symptomatic of a more tolerant atmosphere since the early years of the revolution.

Women must still wear chadors — head-to-toe black veils — in public in accordance with strict Muslim custom. But many also wear lipstick and makeup and allow tufts of hair to slip out of their head scarves.

The guards who imposed such strictures, and used to be ever present on the main shopping streets, are hardly in evidence now.

And despite the economic slump, Iranian shoppers these days are offered an assortment of commercial goods ranging from expensive French perfumes to the latest computer gadgetry to Western movie videos.

Strict customs and currency controls on entry points have been relaxed and many educated Iranians who left after the revolution have responded to government invitations to return.

"We still have a long way to go in political, economic, international and cultural development," Mr. Khorassani said.

But he added, "the Islamic revolution is a success and is here to stay."

lands," a Syrian official said after the league put the issue on the agenda of its next meeting following strong representations by U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown.

"Syria's position on the boycott, both primary (against Israel itself) and secondary or tertiary (against Israel's economic supporters) is that it should be discussed in the framework of a comprehensive peace settlement," he added.

Arab diplomats said that view had not changed after President Hafez Al Assad's meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Geneva on Jan. 16 and appears to be backed by Egypt, the only Arab state officially at peace with Israel.

They said Syria would, if pushed, veto any decision to lift the boycott which has to be unanimous under league rules.

But Syria was not likely to be alone.

The diplomats said Egypt, which lifted the boycott when it signed a peace treaty with Israel 15 years ago, had privately told Arab partners they should stick with the boycott as a valuable bargaining chip in peace negotiations with Israel.

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The vote was clearly aimed at Gulf states dependent on U.S. weapons but the president was given wide powers to waive the ban's conditions.

Western diplomats in the region said it was unlikely to be enforced at a time when U.S. firms were desperate for Gulf arms contracts worth some \$10 billion a year.

The Gulf states have not reacted to the vote publicly.

But the Saudi daily Al Riyadh scoffed at it in a commentary on Sunday as ineffective when Gulf countries could easily obtain alternative supplies from companies in Western Europe and Russia eager for a share in the U.S.-dominated oil market.

"Imposing a ban on arms

supplies makes no difference one way or the other when rival suppliers are available in the markets of Europe and Asia," said the daily that normally reflects government thinking.

Al Riyadh also described the boycott as an Arab bargaining card and said that any decision to end it would have to be unanimous.

This view was shared by the secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Arabs see it as a key to their security and say — how can we feel safe if the Arabs continue to reject our presence in their midst by maintaining the boycott," he said.

But the Arabs ask — would you talk to your neighbour if he barged into your garden, built a fence around half the land and proclaimed a God-given right to own it?

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On wrong track again

U.S. PRESIDENT Bill Clinton has effectively closed the door on lifting or even relaxing the sanctions imposed on Baghdad when he told U.S. Congress Monday that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is still determined to develop nuclear weapons. This assessment came in spite of President Clinton's assurance to his nation that Iraq's nuclear weapons programme is "out of business" and Baghdad's official commitment to put its entire weapons programme including its nuclear capabilities, if any, under long-term international supervision.

Why then Washington still clings to its conviction that Iraq continues to covet nuclear and other mass destruction arsenal and therefore must be denied any relaxing of the punitive measures is something that goes beyond reasonable comprehension. State behaviour cannot be judged on metaphysical basis but rather on hard evidence unless of course there is no intention whatsoever to treat the Arab Gulf country differently no matter how far it goes to meet its obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions. Since Iraq's mass destruction capabilities are for all intents and purposes "out of business," and will be monitored for as long as one can see, one fails to understand how Washington or anybody else for that matter can rightly guess the Iraqi intentions and find sinister plans in them.

The White House is also wrong in apportioning blame for the suffering of the Iraqi masses as a result of the sanctions solely on the Iraqi regime. Such a view is of little relief to the greater majority of Iraqis who have not been able to find or afford to buy basic medicines and food staples for over three years now, given the fact that the regime in Baghdad is solidly entrenched and has an effective grip on power, telling the people that they have only their leadership to blame is of no practical comfort. If pressure must continue to be applied against the Iraqi regime under all circumstances there is a good case for applying it in such a way as to minimise damage to the innocent people. Such a distinction between ruler and ruled could and should be made, and ways and means to give it effect is obviously not beyond the ingenuity of the western nations which still spearhead the hostile campaign against the country.

President Clinton was on stronger grounds when he called for the introduction of pluralistic democracy to the country as a condition for its full rehabilitation within the international community. Baghdad has yet to make significant movement in the direction of democracy and this is a source of alarm not only to Washington but also to the entire region, not to mention its own people. There is clearly no long-term solution to the problem in that country as long as its people are denied democracy and basic human rights. Meanwhile, however, no matter where the responsibility lies, the Iraqi people themselves must enjoy the right to feed themselves properly and find the necessary medicines to treat the sick among them.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL DUSTOUR Arabic daily welcomed the favourable signs from Davos about an agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Despite all the obstacles that have impeded an accord that could be applied immediately to pave the ground for the autonomy role, it seems that now the road has been paved for such a development at the Davos parley between Mr. Arafat and Shimon Peres, said the paper. Jordan, for its part, welcomes this development because the Kingdom is totally committed to the peace option and hopes that the Davos talk would constitute the first practical step towards a solution, said the paper. We need to see concrete progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track because this would open the way for concrete progress on the other tracks and a comprehensive settlement at the end, said the paper. But the paper warned that Israel did not display their good intentions by mere words, but rather through practice at the Washington talks with the different Arab parties so that an opportunity could be created for an aspired peace settlement, said the paper. It said that the Arab parties would like to see the Israelis not only willing, but also taking steps to pull out their forces from occupied Arab land as their share in the peace deal with the Arab states and in implementation of the U.N. resolutions which call for the exchange of land for peace.

J. FANEK, a columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily criticised Washington for exercising enormous pressure on Jordan at the present. Jordan is currently under heavy pressure from the U.S. administration, coupled with economic and security threats to the Kingdom which is steadfast, said the writer. The Americans want Jordan to end its boycott of Israel unilaterally, wants Amman to conclude a separate peace treaty with Israel without awaiting for the other Arab parties and without securing anything for us in exchange for all that, said the writer. Washington wants the Jordanians to tighten the sanctions on Iraq and end the sanctions on Israel, else the siege on Aqaba will continue, no financial aid would come and the Jordanians would find it difficult to get aid from other countries, charged Fanek. These pressures, he said, have been exercised on Jordan through the various U.S. delegations and recently by the U.S. commerce secretary and the U.S. Congress members.

Creating jobs first in occupied Palestinian lands

By Dr. James Zogby

Builders for Peace (BFP), the American project launched by Vice President Al Gore to promote private investment in the West Bank and Gaza, has recently completed a week-long visit to the Middle East. The visit included stops in Tunisia, Jordan, the West Bank and Israel and was led by BFP's co-Presidents, former U.S. Congressman Mel Levine and myself. While the major focus of the trip was designed to bring potential U.S. investors to meet with and develop ties with Palestinian partners, the BFP delegation also conducted briefing sessions with important regional political and business leaders and jointly sponsored a U.S.-Palestinian business round-table discussion in Bethlehem with U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown.

During its week-long stay in the region, the BFP leadership met with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yabia, leaders of the Tunisian, Jordanian and Israeli business communities, Israeli Minister of Industry and Trade Micah Harish, Palestinian officials in the West Bank and Gaza and Palestinian business leaders from the occupied territories.

While our visit was met with widespread enthusiasm for investment and economic growth in the Palestinian lands, we also discovered real frustration with the slow pace of the peace process and fear that further stalemate would erode the support for the process that was generated by the Sept. 13th events and concern, especially among political leaders, that without real progress towards implementation of the accords, foreign economic involvement in the Palestinian territories will be stalled.

In Tunisia, we found the foreign minister to be fully supportive of bringing new private investment to the West Bank and Gaza. He was not only enthusiastic about the BFP programme, but was also eager to see the Tunisian business community participate in the Tri-lateral U.S.-Tunisian-Palestinian ventures.

The Tunisian business leadership has already begun to explore business contacts in the occupied territories, and in a week's time will be sending a delegation to the West Bank and Gaza to gain first-hand experience regarding the opportunities available to them, both in direct Tunisian-Palestinian joint ventures and also in Tunisian-Palestinian-Israeli economic projects.

In Tunisia, the BFP leadership met with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. While Mr. Arafat expressed his strong endorsement of BFP and praised the initiative launched by Vice President Al Gore, he also expressed the widespread Palestinian concern that without real progress on the political front, the entire peace process could unravel. Recognising that genuine progress required movement on the economic front, he nevertheless focused his attention on the political problems currently being negotiated with the Israeli government.

In an effort to make clear his strong support for BFP, Chairman Arafat delivered to the co-presidents an endorsement which read, in part:

"...commend the tireless efforts made by both of you personally in directing Builders

for Peace so as to realise the objectives you set for strengthening bilateral relationships among us and for deepening economic and investment cooperation in the Palestinian Territories, especially so that you were successful in attracting a number of U.S. businessmen and investors to have interest in the Palestinian economy. "I wish your... success... will contribute to furthering our efforts and those of our Palestinian people to establish economic and organic structures and institutions on the road to establishing dynamic, vital and creative economy which will open up wide horizons for the creative capabilities of our people, and which will strengthen the confidence of friendly investors from other countries to the Palestinian economy."

"Therefore, I appeal to all

investors from the U.S.A. and the other friendly countries to invest in Palestine to revive the nascent Palestinian economy, because that will have a great influence on solidifying the basis of a just peace..."

The Jordanian business leadership was as eager as any group to begin investment in the West Bank and Gaza, but was a bit more jaded. The general consensus of the Jordanian business leaders with whom we met was that as long as the Declaration of Principles goes unimplemented, and the Israeli administration in the territories and its regulatory regime stayed in control, investment in growing the Palestinian economy was not

possible. The Jordanian business leaders, while eager to renew their economic connection to the West Bank are not enthusiastic about doing so as long as they must deal with an Israeli occupation administration. Our discussions with them included reports of their frustrations with their separation from the West Bank and their past dealings with Israeli authorities. They reported confiscations of family-owned land, long waits for or denials of building permits, denials of licences and the absence of banking institutions (due to

the lack of trust in the

local economy).

More war and famine predicted for southern Sudan

By Rosalind Mandine Murphy

WASHINGTON — Humanitarian relief workers in southern Sudan are predicting a massive and bloody offensive against rebel factions in the south by Sudanese government forces and increased famine conditions throughout the country in 1994, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officials reported Jan. 27.

This year "will be... bloodier than usual and more famine-prone than usual," Mr. Douglas Stafford, assistant administrator for Humanitarian Response for USAID, said during a press briefing at the State Department.

The conflict in Sudan between the central government in the north and the separatist Sudan's People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the south has been ongoing for the better part of three decades. After a short period of peace, the civil war resumed in 1983. The political conflict has increasingly been seen in religious and ethnic terms, since the North is Arabic-speaking and Muslim and the South is largely animist and Christian. Casualties have

proven high. Mr. Stafford said some reports put the number of those killed in the civil war — either by famine or military action — at one million. The United Nations estimates that 2.5 million people in Sudan are now in need of some form of emergency relief assistance. Of that number, 1.5 million people live in the south.

There are an estimated 391,000 Sudanese refugees in the Central African Republic, Uganda, Ethiopia, Zaire and Kenya, according to USAID. There are 400,000 displaced southern Sudanese living in the greater Khartoum area, and over 600,000 displaced southerners living in transition zone in the states of Darfur, southern Kordofan, northern Bahr Al Ghazal, and northern Upper Nile.

Relief workers in the south report "seeing a definite increase in the activity of northern military that are gathering in that area and getting ready for the annual campaign," Mr. Stafford said.

Relief workers are "projecting that the north is better armed, (and) has more soldiers that are going to be ready for the dry season offensive," he added.

Said. The dry season has already begun in Sudan, he noted.

These relief workers are predicting that major settlements (in the south) will be the target of the north..." he said. "This time, instead of withdrawing after the rainy season begins back to the north, they may in fact occupy the towns," Mr. Stafford said. Atrocities reportedly committed by government forces against the population of the south will drive inhabitants from the area," Mr. Stafford said. (Human rights violations by SPLA forces have also been reported.)

Predicting "a massive evacuation of cities and towns," Mr. Stafford said that the fleeing southerners would either join in the rebels "in the bush... or will go across the border as refugees."

Security problems, such as mining of roads, aerial bombings, and attacks on relief workers, continue in plague humanitarian relief efforts, added Lois Richards, deputy assistant administrator in the Bureau of Humanitarian Response at USAID.

Both the Sudanese govern-

ment and the rebel factions often obstruct relief efforts. Mr. Richards pointed out.

Such obstructions include delaying or refusing permission for trucks, barges and trains of relief assistance to get through.

Nor can Sudan's own agriculture be expected to meet the food shortfall. Relief workers are reporting a 36 per cent drop in the sorghum crop in Sudan. Mr. Stafford said, "We are not going to have only an unhappy situation in the south, but the north itself is going to be facing some pretty severe food shortages," he warned.

In terms of international relief assistance to Sudan, Mr. Stafford said the United States is "by far the largest donor," with a projected aid package this year of close to \$90 million, 60 per cent of which will be allocated to the World Food Programme.

Other major donors to Sudan include the European Community, Germany and Japan. Mr. Stafford noted, in 1993, the international community donated over \$219 million in humanitarian aid to Sudan, according to a recent USAID release — United States Information Agency.

Clinton foreign policy success fading away

By Laurence McQuillan
Reuter

WASHINGTON — President Bill Clinton's foreign travels, designed to make his mark on the world stage, thus far resemble a walk on the beach — with the deep impressions left on the diplomatic sand quickly being washed away.

Second-guessing, both within the United States and abroad, has been on the rise as a growing chorus of critics question what has become of the once-vaunted U.S. leadership role around the world.

Former President George Bush ended his year-long silence on his successor to question Mr. Clinton's "episodic attention" to foreign policy, followed by a tendency to relocate it to "back burner."

Mr. Clinton has made two major foreign trips during his presidency — to Asia in July and Europe earlier this month. Both have fallen short of the results claimed at the time.

During his first major overseas venture, Mr. Clinton signed what was hailed as a dramatic breakthrough in trade relations between Tokyo and Washington. It would slash the trade imbalance between the two nations, both sides agreed.

Next month, when Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa comes to Washington for talks with Mr. Clinton, representatives of both men will hold negotiations over what the two nations agreed to back in Tokyo.

The U.S. side thought they agreed to use specific numbers to measure the progress in lowering the trade advantage Japan enjoys. The Japanese, however, saw nothing in the accord that tied them to that approach.

During Mr. Clinton's stop in Moscow this month, he met with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and proclaimed his confidence that reforms would not be slowed by the unexpectedly strong showing by ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky in parliamentary elections.

If the weeks since the Clinton visit, reform architect Yegor Gaidar resigned claiming the government was abandoning monetary controls and Finance Minister Boris Yeforov left warning of a red economic coup, hyperinflation and an approaching social explosion.

A team of International Monetary Fund experts leaves Tuesday for Moscow on a mission designed to reach agreement on a new economic reform plan and a \$1.5 billion loan.

IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus offered a gloomy assessment of the mission's chances, saying: "I cannot guarantee that we will end up successfully, but at least we will have gone down a bit of the same road together."

As the aftershocks of the parliamentary elections were still being felt, the Washington Post reported Saturday that the administration "now is gloomily prepared to accept that President Boris Yeltsin probably will not be able to deliver on his strong personal assurances... that economic reforms will remain intact."

During the summer summit of the seven industrialised nations in Tokyo and a gathering of NATO leaders in Brussels this month, the allies threatened to use air strikes to end the three-way civil war among Muslims, Serbs and Croats.

The United States, however, is refusing to go along with tougher action in dealing with the fighting, prompting a frustrated French official to say: "We are on two different wavelengths."

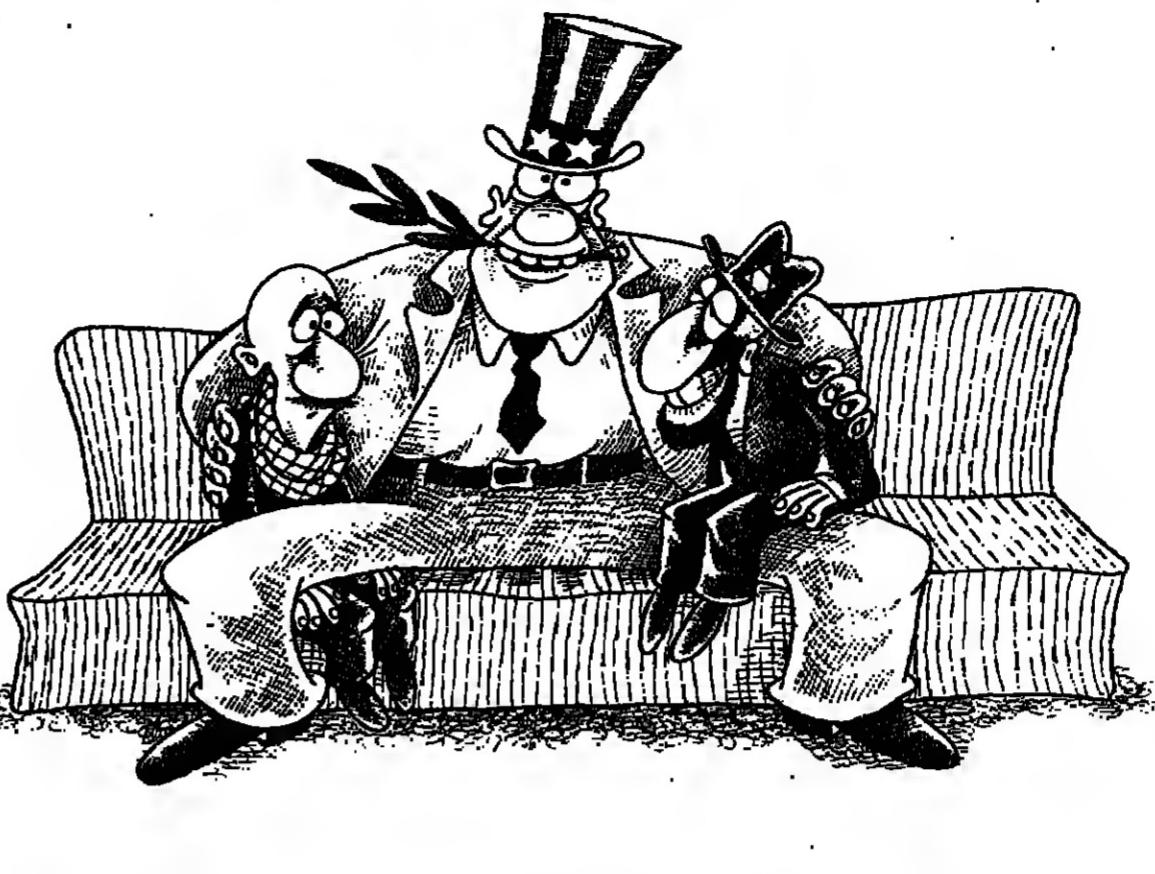
Former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney says he is starting to worry about the fact that... the conduct of U.S. foreign policy over the last few months has sometimes failed to instill respect in our adversaries and inspire confidence in our allies."

It is "dangerous if there's a lack of consistency and focus in U.S. policy," he said in an interview on public television's McNeil/Lehrer News Hour.

The last man to occupy the oval office, himself criticised for spending too much time with foreign affairs, says Mr. Clinton may have gone too far the other way.

"President Clinton made it obvious he wants to concentrate on domestic policy and put foreign policy on 'back burner,' but he found out that isn't possible," Mr. Bush said in an interview in the February issue of Washingtonian Magazine.

M. KAHIL



Features

Arafat ready to sign accord

(Continued from page 1)

PLO told military radio that the Palestinians had accepted most of the Jewish state's security demands.

They agreed that the autonomous Jericho region would be 54 square kilometres, around a fifth of what they wanted, and had agreed that Israel would control crossing points.

Meanwhile, a PLO official in Cairo said the organisation is awaiting word from the Israelis in bold more talks this week on finalising the accord.

Israeli army radio said the working group is to meet Wednesday or Thursday in Cairo.

In his address to the U.N. commission, which began its annual six-week session on Monday, Mr. Arafat appealed for pressure on Israel over human rights to be maintained.

The commission has passed resolutions condemning Israeli practices in the territories every year since Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in 1967, but U.S. officials

have said they will push this year for a "more balanced" resolution recognising the moves towards peace.

Mr. Arafat told the commission that Palestinians were still having their basic human rights abused in the occupied territories where, he said, torture, killings and arbitrary arrests continued.

The PLO leader said Palestinian youths were still being persecuted on the streets and more than 14,000 Palestinians were detained in Israeli prisons and camps.

"I have spoken to you and I have told you how much our Palestinian people are suffering under the Israeli occupation," Mr. Arafat said, referring to two previous visits to the commission.

"They are still suffering, from violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms which have come to encompass all rights without exception, starting with the violation of the right to life and ending with the violation of the right to freedom of expression, freedom of opinion."

Ekeus offers no clue to sanctions

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Ekeus is expected in Baghdad on Wednesday for talks on setting up a system of long-term monitoring of Iraq's weapons programmes.

On any recommendation to lift the blockade, Mr. Ekeus referred Tuesday to the wider "political ambience," explaining that it would be hard to convince the Security Council to lift sanctions on Iraq if Baghdad were grossly violating other terms of the "Gulf war ceasefire."

Most of Iraq's arms, including nuclear, long-range missile, chemical and biological weapons programmes, were destroyed either by allied

bombs during the Gulf war or under the supervision of U.N. inspectors over the past three years.

A U.N. team of chemical experts arrived in Baghdad Tuesday for a two-week inspection linked to efforts to set up long-term monitoring of Iraq's weapons programmes.

"The aim of our mission is to identify and to tag, that means to seal, special chemical production equipment which was procured by the Iraqi chemical warfare programme in the past," said Horst Reeps, leader of the 11-member team.

Mr. Reeps' recommendations will give Mr. Ekeus a basis for deciding which should be destroyed and which could be returned to the Iraqis.

Shots fired during Tehran speech

(Continued from page 1)

Speech: "Our enemies have lost hope in conspiring against us. Their newest trick is to use the morale of the people as a weapon."

The crowd's immediate reaction to the incident was to

denounce the Iraq-based Mujahedeen — invariably blamed in Iran for any political violence.

"Death to the monafeq," they chanted, in reference to the Mujahedeen who are called monafeqeen (hypocrites) in Iran in a play of words on their names.

Village kicks up a stink over rotting fish aroma

By Jill Serjeant
Reuter

GRIMSBY, England — The people of Grimsby are kicking up a stink over the smells that have put their town, one of Europe's biggest fishing ports, on the tourist map.

The pong of rotting fish that has for decades greeted visitors to the bracing North Sea town is destined to join the below-decks aroma of sweaty socks and diesel fuel now found only in the Fishing Heritage Museum.

Environmental health officials have ordered Grimsby's fish offal factory, which turns leftovers into animal feed, to clean up its act in line with new air pollution laws.

But the fishy whiff is precisely the smell that the local tourist board has been using, with typically wry northern English humour, to promote the town as a tourist attraction.

"The smells have certainly worked for Grimsby. They have put us back on the map again," said Grimsby Marketing Officer Lynda Scott.

Grimsby's Fishing Heritage Museum plans to bottle the offal odour and preserve it with 23 other sea-faring smells such as "sentiment of seaweed" and "hint of haddock" in the award-winning centre which celebrates the heyday of fishing.

The smells are an essential part of Grimsby's unique heritage. Soon the only smells you'll be able to smell are those in the museum," said Mr. Doughty.

Cod wars, industrialisation and competition from burgers and pizzas to the traditional British snack of fish and chips saw the number of fishermen in Grimsby dwindle from 5,700 in 1955 to fewer than 580 in 1985.

But the lure of the sea is still in the Grimsby blood — as well as in the air.

While the tourist board

sends out "whiff" you were here postcards, the proud but depleted fishing industry is embarking on ambitious plans to secure its future into the 21st century.

Bulldozers move in next month to demolish the dilapidated Victorian market sheds and crumbling quays of the fish docks before a modern landing and distribution centre is built at the mouth of the River Humber.

Trawlers, fish merchants and Grimsby council are working together on the £13.5 million (\$20 million) regeneration scheme aimed at regaining the town's position as a leading international fishing port.

"It is very exciting for the future of the industry. If nothing is done, Grimsby would die as a fishing port," said Derek Young, finance director of the Fish Dock Enterprises Consortium.

Grimsby already has some 84,950 cubic metres of cold storage facilities, making it one of the largest food centres in the world.

More than 7,000 jobs, or 10 per cent of Grimsby's work force, are directly dependent on the fishing and fish processing industry and the environmental hopes the modernised docks will attract more boats from Iceland, Norway and Russia.

Mr. Young said the project, backed by a £5.43 million (\$8.1 million) grant from the European Union, was the only major development in Britain's shrinking fishing industry.

The redevelopment means visitors will still be able to follow their noses to Grimsby and hear the cries of seagulls swooping over catches of fresh herring, mackerel and cod.

Families living near the malodorous fish offal factory on the outskirts of Grimsby, however, have welcomed the imminent disappearance of the worst aroma in town.

Ban on their best weapon leaves locust fighters hopping mad

By Nick Louth
Reuters

AMSTERDAM — To ancient eyes the sight of a swarm of locusts was a terrifying message from God, a harbinger of doom and famine.

The PLO leader said Palestinian youths were still being persecuted on the streets and more than 14,000 Palestinians were detained in Israeli prisons and camps.

"I have spoken to you and I have told you how much our Palestinian people are suffering under the Israeli occupation," Mr. Arafat said, referring to two previous visits to the commission.

"They are still suffering, from violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms which have come to encompass all rights without exception, starting with the violation of the right to life and ending with the violation of the right to freedom of expression, freedom of opinion."

Locust plagues have diminished in scale and frequency in the past three decades. But scientists are now coming round to the view that it is because of the prevalence of unusually dry weather rather than anything they have done.

The worst prospect is that the current swarms, aided by sufficiently wet weather, could turn into a Biblical-style plague of a kind last seen in the late 1980s.

The size and power of the biggest locust swarms are almost unimaginable and their food consumption unmatched in nature.

The biggest single swarm covered an area of 1,000 square km — enough to cover greater London — and comprised 50 billion insects.

With each locust able to consume its own weight (about two grammes or less than one-tenth of an ounce) daily the swarm consumed 100,000 tonnes of vegetation a day.

Even to scientists in the late 20th century, the approach of a cloud of billions of locusts is awe-inspiring.

"If you get a swarm end-on it can look like a sort of storm cloud coming up on you at a very low altitude, that is when it is at its most dramatic," said Phil Symmons, the world's most experienced locust fighter.

After an unusually short four-year gap locust swarms are beginning to gather again, with reports of upsurges in India, Pakistan, Morocco and parts of southern Africa.

Locust fighters are banned from using their best weapon, a pesticide called dieldrin which can stop swarms forming.

"It is pretty worrying," said entomologist Arnold van Huis of Wageningen University in the eastern Netherlands.

Locust experts from all over the world met at the university in December to rethink their strategies.

development before the locusts had taken to the air.

Because dieldrin accumulates for a long time in the body only very low doses were needed and the voracious creatures would slowly be poisoned.

Now that dieldrin is banned, less effective insecticides, which can be broken down by the locust, have to be used. This means high doses to kill them immediately.

This approach is more costly and, scientists say, more damaging to the ecosystem than dieldrin. It is also harder to organise in Third World countries with few resources.

"Without dieldrin you have to wait until there are big swarms. They have to be monitored, and the risks of missing them are much higher," Mr. Van Huis said.

Other possible weapons are being investigated.

Britain's International Institute of Biological Control, near Ascot west of London, is experimenting with a fungus which penetrates the locust's body shell and slowly kills it

from the inside, but is harmless to other insects and animals. Help may come from other sources.

In November 1988 billions of locusts flew from North Africa into the Atlantic, driven out to sea by a huge tropical storm. Most died, but some reached Central and South America 5,000 km away.

"It is almost incredible. They must have been over the sea for a week. They shouldn't have enough body fat for this," Mr. Van Huis said.



When food is little, locusts eat each other (File photo)

Historian finds 'exuberant pessimism' rampant in Germany

By Tom Heneghan
Reuters

BONN — Historian Fritz Stern has the knack of finding the right phrase to describe the prevailing mood in Germany. His latest is "exuberant pessimism."

One of the leading American experts on Germany, Mr. Stern has spent almost four months observing his favourite subject matter from the unusual post of adviser to the U.S. embassy in Bonn.

He found a Germany deep in self-doubt, filled with worries that have come through in his own recent writing about the setbacks the country has faced since uniting in 1990.

But Mr. Stern, 67, has also seen enough of the changes underway to go back to his professor's chair at Columbia University in New York with a noticeably more positive outlook.

"I had been so troubled by the Germans' exuberant pessimism that I felt one bad to remember that things basically were very good," he told Reuters before leaving Bonn last weekend.

"I now tend to stress, my God, what achievements we've made since 1989, even if things have not all worked out as they should have," he said.

The problems spawning such pessimism — mounting unemployment, disillusion in the ex-communist east, neo-Nazi violence — have dominated the headlines since the divided nation hastily reunited three years ago.

To understand the longer-term trends behind the news, Richard Holbrooke, an Asian specialist unexpectedly named as the new U.S. ambassador to Bonn, brought his longtime friend, Mr. Stern, along for a unique stint as "visiting historian."

"One would wish they have fewer difficulties in defining their national interest and ceasing to worry so much about their national identity, but one has to respect where that comes from," he argued.

"What one really ought to say is perhaps, if so many of you feel the country is not normal, then start behaving like a normal country."

Reminded of the criticism Bonn reaped when it first attempted a "normal" foreign policy — its lonely drive to recognise Croatia and Slovenia in 1991 — Mr. Stern added: "Try to behave like a normal country with exceptional tact..."

His writings have won him such respect in Germany that, in 1987, he became the only foreigner ever to address the Bonn parliament at the special annual sitting to commemorate the 1953 workers' uprising in East Germany.

During his short stay in Bonn, he was invited to give a dozen lectures at universities around the country and flooded with far more interview requests than he could meet.

Mr. Stern, whose tweed jackets, sparkling eyes and shock of white hair make him stand out among the dark-suited diplomats, says his stay helped him update his views on what he calls "Germany's second chance."

The fact that unification came as the world slid into recession has made the merger far more difficult than anyone foresaw when the Berlin wall was opened in 1989, he says.

Many Germans have reacted by falling into a "weepy mood" that overlooks the great strides the country is making.

"It is disappointing that there is as much misunderstanding as there is at the same time as there is a great deal of constructive material and psychological support for the new laender (eastern states)," he said.

"Taxi-drivers tell you they would wish one could rebuild the wall, only higher," he said, citing yet another example of what he, quoting Freud, likes to call "the narcissism of small differences" between the East and the West.

The problems are real, he hastens to add, but so are the undreamed-of opportunities Germany now has.

"When I see a state like Saxony (in east Germany), I see a region that may well become one of the most modern regions of all Europe."

Mr. Stern takes a similarly positive approach towards Germany's future political role, an issue the country has been debating for three years now while its edgy neighbours wait for clear signs on which way it will go.

"One would wish they have fewer difficulties in defining their national interest and ceasing to worry so much about their national identity, but one has to respect where that comes from," he argued.

"What one really ought to say is perhaps, if so many of you feel the country is not normal, then start behaving like a normal country."

Reminded of the criticism Bonn reaped when it first attempted a "normal" foreign policy — its lonely drive to recognise Croatia and Slovenia in 1991 — Mr. Stern added: "Try to behave like a normal country with exceptional tact..."

Many opposition Social Democrats, traditionally suspicious of the armed forces, argue that Germany's past aggression should bar it from military action beyond its borders.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's efforts to have German troops join their allies in peacekeeping missions in the post-cold war world have been another start-and-go struggle.

While the sense of historic responsibility in a country that has

area and out of area their presence is expected, required and really fulfills, in a different world, the aims of the fathers of the federal republic," he argued, drawing a conclusion that quite a few Germans might still question.

"They're going to have great difficulties with this now and

there is a lack of political leadership that helps to expedite deep issues like that," he observed.

"To understand with a certain amount of empathy the history of Germany in the 20th century

Economy

London's FTSE index pierces 3,500 mark

LONDON (P) - British shares strode through the 3,500 mark on the key 100-share index for the first time Tuesday, and traders and analysts said the bull run was set to continue.

The rise in the London market followed further sharp gains on Wall Street overnight and in the Far East early Tuesday. Continental European bourses also mainly remained firm.

The Financial Times-Stock Exchange (FTSE) index of 100 leading British shares opened 19.6 points higher at 3,511.4, beating its previous intraday high of 3,496.1 on Jan. 1. It hit a closing high of 3,491.8 on Monday.

The FTSE, which later eased back below 3,500 in late morning on profit-taking, was again helped by sharp gains in British Aerospace as the market reacted with enthusiasm to the sale of its Rover car-making unit to BMW.

Alison Southey, strategist with brokerage Nomura International, who are leading bulls of the London market, said the FTSE index could rise to 3,700 "imminently."

She said the market was firmly based on expected strong economic growth in Britain and rising company earnings this year, combined with a background of interest rates that are relatively low and likely to remain so, and subdued

inflation.

Richard Kersley of BZW said sentiment was still very positive, with trading volumes high, but said he would like to see gains in government bonds add a significant upturn in corporate earnings to support market fundamentals.

The annual reporting season for major British companies is just about to start, with names such as British Telecom, British Petroleum and Reuters Holdings PLC due to report next week.

Traders said some correction was possible after the run-up, which has seen FTSE rise 400 points since October.

But one senior trader said London looked set to remain

firm as international investors, such as Japanese and U.S. institutions, saw it as a "safe haven" compared with faltering emerging markets or with continental Europe, where expectations of economic growth are lower.

"The message is 'don't be short,'" said another senior trader, who said the market would not look overvalued if the quality of company earnings comes through as expected.

European bourses were also mostly firm Tuesday, although there were signs of profit-taking emerging.

In Germany, where BMW held the sharp gains made Monday on news of its purch-

ase of Rover, the DAX index was up 11.18, or 0.51 per cent, to 2,188.63 in late morning.

But the Paris Bourse retreated from a firmer start, with the CAC 40 down 2.56 points to 2,331.8.

Sentiment overall in equity markets was helped by Wall Street's 33-point rise to 3,978 on the Dow Jones index, another record, despite warnings by Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan that a long-expected rise in short-term U.S. interest rates could now be on the way.

But traders here said any rise in short-term U.S. rates would come from a position of strength in the U.S. economy.

Fiat crashes to heavy loss in '93

TURIN, Italy (R) — Carmaker Fiat SPA, Italy's largest private firm, announced Monday it lost 1.8 trillion lire (\$1.05 billion) last year due to the crisis in the European car market.

It was the company's first loss for more than a decade and reflected the slump in European car sales which fell around 15 per cent last year.

Fiat made a 551 billion lire (\$324 million) profit in 1992.

The car company said the loss reflected the dramatic situation facing the European car industry.

Algeria says IMF wants devaluation of dinar by 30-50%

ALGIERS (R) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) wants Algeria to devalue the dinar by 30 to 50 per cent but this is more than the country can bear, Algerian state radio said Tuesday.

"The IMF is seeking a 30 to 50 per cent devaluation of the dinar, a wider opening of the Algerian market and an end to subsidies to its money-losing state firms," the radio said.

"The Malek government is conscious that the application of these measures would be too much for the population to bear," it added.

Algeria's new president Liamine Zeroual, sworn in on Monday, has retained Redha Malek as prime minister.

An Algerian team is due to visit Washington shortly for a new round of talks with the IMF, state news agency APS reported late Monday.

Economy Minister Mourad Benachenhou said in a newspaper interview last week he hoped to sign a letter of intent with the IMF for a standby loan by the end of the February.

Lebanese parliament passes 1994 budget

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's parliament passed into law Monday a 4,690 billion Lebanese lira (\$2.75 billion) budget for 1994 despite criticisms of government economic and financial policies during a five-day budget debate.

Some of the 127 deputies accused Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri during the weekend debate of behaving like a Sultan and unleashing savage capitalism on Lebanon.

The 1994 budget was nearly 24 per cent over the 1993 budget of 3,800 billion liras.

Details of proposed expenditures and revenues were not immediately available but minister of state for finance Fuad Siniora has forecast a 42 per cent deficit. The 1993 deficit forecast was 50 per cent but increased revenue collection and control of expenditure last year reduced it to 42 per cent.

Mr. Siniora told parliament the government's policies were aimed at restoring confidence, reducing inflation, stabilising

Australian GDP outlook brightens

CANBERRA (R) — The Australian government Tuesday issued a batch of fresh economic forecasts showing the country is coming out of its prolonged recession with strong growth and low inflation.

Treasurer Ralph Willis, forecasting economic growth of 3.5 per cent in the year to June 30, told parliament Australia now had its best economic record in 30 years.

"That rate of growth is of course virtually in excess of every country in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)," Mr. Willis said.

They said Lebanon had more pressing needs such as housing and financing the return home of tens of thousands of people displaced by the 1975-90 civil war.

Deputies also criticised the government for seeking foreign finance for reconstruction. The government said foreign debt was around \$350 million but some deputies said it was over \$650 million.

budget in August.

Mr. Willis said inflation, as measured by the consumer price index, would be only 2.0 per cent in 1993/94, below the 3.5 per cent rate forecast.

"We are seeing a faster rate of recovery without the signs of emerging inflationary and current-account constraints which have too often characterised stronger periods of economic growth in previous economic upturns," the treasurer said.

"We have the best conjuncture of economic fundamentals for every country in the OECD

Cooperation and Development," he pointed out.

This had been achieved while the international economy remained weak, depressing the prices of Australia's commodity exports, he said. Australian GDP growth would accelerate to 4.0 per cent in 1994/95 as the world picked up pace, he said.

The Australian economy grew 2.7 per cent in 1992/93.

Mr. Willis said employment forecast 2.75 per cent growth

for the year when it released its

Turkish central bank head quits

ANKARA (R) — Turkish central bank governor Bülent Gültækir resigned Monday after a crisis that forced him to devalue the lira, saying he could no longer work with the prime minister and that confidence was fading in the country.

He was the second governor of the central bank to quit within less than six months.

Mr. Gültækir said his departure, which came after markets in Istanbul closed Monday, would not lead to a new crisis.

But bankers said it could aggravate the market turmoil.

The central bank and the treasury crossed swords after his resignation, blaming each other over last week's 11.97 per cent devaluation of the lira.

Mr. Gültækir, who took up his post five months ago, said he could not work with prime minister Tansu Ciller.

"Under these circumstances, I do not believe any longer that I can work in harmony with the prime minister and that I can be of service to Turkey and the central bank," he said.

His predecessor Rıduş Sarı-

coglu also quit over a policy dispute with Ms. Ciller, who failed in her attempt to push interest rates down last year.

"I feel that the atmosphere of confidence is fading in Turkey," Mr. Gültækir said. A medium-term economic programme was lacking, he added.

"Political resolution is needed," he said, defending his record as governor during 10 days of market turmoil.

"I am quitting as a captain who has guided his ship to calm waters. The markets have been brought fully under control," Mr. Gültækir told a news conference.

But overnight interest rates hit 500 per cent on the interbank market as banks struggled to find liquidity after the devaluation and other central bank measures to defend the lira. Rates later eased to 100 per cent.

The lira ended at 17,150 to the dollar, up 450 lira from the opening, as cash-strapped banks hunted for lira.

Bankers said the resignation could erode Ms. Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) ahead

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 2, 1994
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES:

You have toegoty to your favour to deal with some obstacles that will require patience this morning as the Moon squares Mars and the Sun squares Jupiter indicating a tendency toward extravagance.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19)

By getting in touch with expert advisors, you are now able to get the advice and answers you have been seeking with regard to business of personal matters.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21)

"Think big and get big" should be your motto today, not only in business but personal, artistic, creative matters as well for your success.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21)

A day to think pretty much in terms of self and your most cherished ambitions. If it is not necessary to go out, by all means stay at home.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19)

Since you keep yourself so busy with practical and material affairs, you hardly take the time for emotional or creative things of life.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21)

By getting an early start you can put all those accumulated tasks behind you very quickly and efficiently today.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21)

The ideal day and night to start working on projects of great size and scope. Contact the right people and start the ball rolling efficiently.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22)

Family is expecting much

BMW takeover of Rover creates new force in car market

It will also have access to low-cost plants developed with Japanese technology at Longbridge and Cowley in central England which build Rover's 600 executive car, launched late last year in rival BMW's own 3-series and enter the German market.

Bayerische Motoren Werke (BMW) A.G. is to pay \$800 million (\$1.2 billion) in cash for Britain's biggest carmaker but also take over various Rover debts and liabilities amounting to another £900 million (\$1.35 billion).

The deal upset Rover's Japanese partner Honda, which said it would keep its 31 per cent share of the British firm.

The decision of BAE to sell its Rover shares to BMW negates Honda and Rover's long-term efforts to establish a firm future for Rover as a British

company with its own brand identity," Honda President Nobuhiko Kawamoto said in a statement.

But Mr. Doppelfeld said Rover would continue to operate as a separate company, its marque would be retained and BMW hoped its management would stay on.

While management jobs appeared safe, British union officials feared the takeover could mean big job losses for workers.

Here we have two companies both producing half a million cars a year, each selling into the same market," said Jack Adams of the Transport Workers' Union.

But BMW promised the takeover would create rather than destroy British jobs.

"Long-term jobs will not just be secured, but expanded,"

said BMW's Doppelfeld.

Ford, Nissan and many other foreign companies are still making cars in Britain but Rover's sale leaves only small specialist producers, notably Rolls-Royce, in British hands.

With Rover, BMW has acquired a proud history of British car engineering going back to 1905. But it has also inherited a legacy of industrial strife which peaked in the 1970s and crippled the company.

Rover's history goes back to 1905 when Lord Austin founded the Austin Motor Company at Longbridge.

In 1952, Austin and Morris, Britain's two most modern and highly-productive car companies, merged to become the British Motor Corporation making more than 280,000 vehicles annually.

The government sold Rover in 1988 for just £150 million (\$225 million) to British Aerospace.

In the 1980s, tough business men were called in by the government to get the firm into shape. The name was changed to B.L., then Austin Rover, then just Rover, as buses, trucks and parts divisions were sold off and the workforce slashed.

In the 1980s, tough business men were called in by the government to get the firm into shape. The name was changed to B.L., then Austin Rover, then just Rover, as buses, trucks and parts divisions were sold off and the workforce slashed.

Sharing Honda's dismay,

many Britons were saddened to see the company sold just as it was emerging from decades of trouble to become a success story.

Rover is the only car-maker to report an operating profit for 1993 during one of the deepest crises in the industry.

Pre-tax profit was estimated at £6 million (\$8 million) on sales of £4.3 billion (\$6.5 billion).

But George Simpson, Rover chairman and British Aerospace (BAE) board member, insisted the BMW deal was the best alternative.

"Honda's interest was never in acquiring 100 per cent of Rover, they wanted to increase their equity stake. For BAE, our aim was a 100 per cent exit so we sold to BMW and not to Honda," he told Reuters.

THE Daily Crossword

by Roger Jurgens



Economy

JORDAN TIMES, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1994 7

Fed warns of higher U.S. interest rates ahead

WASHINGTON (R) — Federal Reserve (Fed) Chairman Alan Greenspan Monday sounded upbeat about the U.S. economy, but the central bank's head warned that interest rates are headed higher to ward off inflation.

The Clinton administration appeared resigned to accepting a Federal Reserve move to push up short-term interest rates soon, even though inflation is well in check.

Backing away from a political fight, President Clinton acknowledged that a Federal Reserve move to tighten credit may head off a jump in long-term rates, which he views as far more harmful to the growth outlook.

"If they (the Fed) make that decision on short-term rates, what I hope is it won't raise long-term rates because there's no need to do it," the president said.

Politicians are clearly nervous that raising interest rates too soon will still the long-awaited economic recovery.

Even though the economy grew at a 2.9 per cent rate last year, its best showing since 1988, the unemployment rate

remains high and job losses are daily news as defence, corporate and government cutbacks continue.

Wall Street analysts said Mr. Greenspan's tough talk Monday sent a clear signal that the Fed is getting ready to act soon and ahead of clear evidence that price pressures are building.

"There certainly is in the Fed's thinking the idea of a pre-emptive" and prolonged weakening of economic activity, said David Jones, economist at Auhrey G. Lanston and Co.

"It could happen any time after the FOMC meets," he said.

The central bank's willingness to move quickly before inflation emerges marks "a major change and radical departure for the Federal Reserve," said Allen Sinai of Lehman Bros. Global Economics.

What the Fed is saying is that it is willing to slow the

pace of economic growth, keeping the unemployment rate higher, to avoid future price problems, Mr. Sinai said.

And Mr. Greenspan is getting an unusual green light from the Clinton administration to move ahead with this radical policy.

Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen indicated in an interview on Cable News Network that he did not expect a Fed move would harm the economic outlook unduly.

"If the Fed takes any action, I would think it would be modest and I would think it would be more of a pre-emptive strike," Mr. Bentsen said.

Jordanian moneychangers monitor the economic and monetary situation in Iraq closely. The land road to Jordan is Iraq's only link with the outside world, and travellers have to transit through Jordan where they trade their money for other currencies.

Cheap long-bond yields are far more important to the administration because it sees them having greater impact on growth — they determine 30-year mortgage rates, stimulating the housing sector, and they

help lower the cost of financing the huge federal budget deficit.

Overall, Mr. Greenspan painted a decidedly upbeat picture of the nation's economic health, which has been growing in fits and starts now for 34 months.

"The underlying long-term economic outlook in this country is improving quite measurably... There is a degree of support in this economy which was not a year ago," he said.

He said inflation is under control, real gross domestic product is positive, labour markets are improving and the household and business sectors are buoyant.

But he also said the expansion remains uneven — business hiring is slow, defence and government cutbacks are causing sizeable disruptions and the export sector is hampered by continued weakness among major U.S. trading partners, notably Germany and Japan.

Iraqi dinar takes a nosedive

AMMAN (AP) — The Iraqi dinar plunged to an all-time low against other currencies Tuesday amid worsening economic conditions in a country isolated by an international embargo enforced 40 months ago.

Jordanian moneychangers said the dinar was trading at 265 to the dollar at midday Tuesday, compared to its Monday's closing rate of 235 to the dollar.

Last week, it had plunged to 200 to the dollar. However, the official Iraqi rate remained \$3.22 to the dinar.

Jordanian moneychangers

monitor the economic and monetary situation in Iraq closely. The land road to Jordan is Iraq's only link with the outside world, and travellers have to transit through Jordan where they trade their money for other currencies.

"Given the lack of sufficient government reserves of foreign

licensed exchange houses had resumed activities following a Central Bank of Iraq decision allowing them free dealings based on market trends.

The decision, announced on Iraq's state television Thursday, banned foreign currency trading by street dealers.

But Mr. Alami said licensed dealers were only buying hard currency and refusing to sell even at a 20 per cent margin.

As Iraqi trader, speaking to the Associated Press by telephone from Baghdad, said the declining value of the dinar had doubled the prices of many commodities.

Speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, he said a kilogramme of wheat flour now costs 60 Iraqi dinars, compared to 30 week ago.

"Many other items, including sugar, rice and milk powder, have gone beyond the reach of average Iraqis," he said.

JORDAN MARKET PLACE

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARCHES	
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - 2001/1994	
ORGANIZED MARKET MEETING AT 10:00 AM TUESDAY 01/02/1994	
COMPANY'S NAME	
TRANSAK VOLME CLOSING PRICE PITCH	
JD PITCH	
154,260 191,650 192,500 234,560	
748,225 7,580 8,050 8,045	
30,200 3,200 3,200 3,190	
12,126 2,120 2,120 2,100	
80,001 2,040 2,040 2,040	
162,000 2,040 2,040 2,040	
7,498 4,770 4,852 4,770	
4,430 4,430 4,430 4,430	
136,397 2,040 2,040 2,040	
13,200 2,040 2,040 2,040	
60,326 2,040 2,040 2,040	
21,000 2,040 2,040 2,040	
25,524 2,040 2,040 2,040	
2,568 2,040 2,040 2,040	
453,940 4,430 4,430 4,430	
1,070 1,070 1,070 1,070	
27,000 2,040 2,040 2,040	
47,042 2,040 2,040 2,040	
304,000 2,040 2,040 2,040	
1,070 1,070 1,070 1,070	
1,070 1,070 1,070 1,070	
310,187 2,040 2,040 2,040	
18,000 10,440 10,440 10,470	
848 2,040 2,040 2,040	
211,329 12,270 12,270 12,300	
1,070 1,070 1,070 1,070	
2,973 4,810 4,810 4,820	
309,000 2,040 2,040 2,040	
10,134 2,040 2,040 2,040	
27,750 3,750 3,750 3,820	
87,102 18,500 18,750 18,750	
42,250 20,440 20,440 20,470	
5,837 1,420 1,420 1,430	
18,000 10,440 10,440 10,470	
1,070 1,070 1,070 1,070	
1,070 1,070 1,070 1,070	
5,850 5,850 5,850 5,862**	
108,55 108,55 108,55	
1,1210 1,1210 1,1210	
Grand Total: 2,390,375	

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Izetbegovic wants 'fair peace'

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnia's Muslim President, Alija Izetbegovic, said Tuesday he was not prepared to accept peace to end the 22-month-old war in his country unless it was fair.

As he spoke, Serb gunners were reported to have stepped up their shelling of Sarajevo and there were further clashes between Muslims and Croats in the southern city of Mostar.

A U.N. military spokesman said one person was killed and eight were wounded in government-held areas of Sarajevo, including a child hit by a sniper, while two people were wounded on the Serb side of the lines.

In Mostar, local radios reported a total of 13 people wounded on both sides of the Muslim-Croat front line in the city.

Russian ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky, continuing a visit to Yugoslavia where he has issued a series of extreme statements, arrived in Montenegro and did not disappoint his audience.

"World history cannot do without wars," he told officials. "But let's conduct the kind of policy that will shift these little wars far from the Slav world and into Africa, Latin America or India."

In Sarajevo, Mr. Izetbegovic

said after talks with Yasushi Akashi, U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali's special envoy to former Yugoslavia, that the Bosnian government would not sign any agreement at negotiations scheduled for Feb. 10 in Geneva later this month if it was not offered a fair peace.

In a brief statement to reporters, the Bosnian leader said: "I told (Akashi) that we are not for peace under any kind of conditions. We are for a fair peace."

"That fair peace has not been offered to us. If no one offers us one, we will not sign any document. Not now, on the 10th of February this year and not on the 10th of February next year."

Peace mediator Lord Owen, co-chairman of the Geneva talks with Norway's Thorvald Stoltenberg, has said the negotiations are virtually stalled.

The Muslims have been encouraged by battlefield successes against the Bosnian Croats and hope that the increasing pressure of economic sanctions on Belgrade will force Serbs to agree to the territorial concessions that Mr. Izetbegovic has demanded.

But Bosnia's Serbs have issued a general mobilisation

order, prompting fears that they are ready for a major push in the fighting.

The United Nations has estimated that up to 5,000 regular Croatian army troops have crossed into Bosnia to help the Croats there, setting the stage for more fighting with the Muslims.

Croat and Muslim forces duelled with small arms and heavy machine guns in the Vitez area of central Bosnia Monday.

U.N. observers spotted helicopter activity by both sides in violation of the U.N. "no-fly" decree monitored by NATO jets.

A transport helicopter belonging to the Muslim-led Bosnian army was seen loading up and taking off near Novi Travnik while a Croat helicopter was observed hovering over a Vitez quarry used as a base to resupply Croat ground troops, Col. Aikman said.

Trucks carrying the world's largest mobile hospital began arriving in the Muslim sector of Mostar after being halted and checked twice by Bosnian Croats, U.N. officials said.

The first 19 containers of the massive field hospital, donated to the Bosnian government by a South African charity, passed the last Croat checkpoint south of Mostar. The remaining 19 containers are expected to be brought in Wednesday.

Asked if there was still light at the end of the tunnel, he said: "That would be an exaggerated statement."

Right-wing leader General Constant Viljoen, whose Afrikaner People's Front (AVF) is a key member of the Freedom Alliance, said later that if Afrikaners did not get a homeland

soon he doubted the April elections would be possible.

"Violence is already very high and if we don't get a Volkstaat (homeland) it will go through the ceiling," he said in a television interview.

More than 4,000 people died in political violence last year and political leaders have warned it could surge unless rightwingers were brought on board the transition to majority rule after more than three centuries of white domination.

ANC spokesman Carl Niehaus condemned Gen. Viljoen's comments Tuesday and said the ANC, which is widely expected to dominate the election results, did not fear outright civil war.

"The majority of South Africans, even AVF supporters want to avoid that at all costs."

ANC meets on latest political deadlock

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Leaders of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) gathered for a special meeting in Johannesburg Tuesday to assess the latest deadlock in constitutional talks with black and white conservatives.

Talks between the government, the ANC and the right-wing Freedom Alliance of Black and white conservatives stalled in Victoria late Monday.

"The ANC and the Freedom All since cannot find each other," chief government negotiator Roelf Meyer told reporters.

"Unless they... change their positions in the next 48 hours, there's not going to be much progress on the way forward," he said.

ANC Chairman Thabo Mbeki

said he would take right-wing proposals for constitutional amendments to the 26-member National Working Committee (NWC) Tuesday.

"The discussion is going on. We are still intent on finding a solution," he told reporters.

But Communist Party veteran Joe Slovo said there was little hope of a settlement that would persuade right-wingers to abandon their boycott of the country's first all-race election in April.

Asked if there was still light at the end of the tunnel, he said: "That would be an exaggerated statement."

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expected to dominate the election results, did not fear

outright civil war.

"The majority of South Africans, even AVF supporters want to avoid that at all costs."

N. Korea threatens end to nuclear 'goodwill'

TOKYO (R) — North Korea, slamming what it calls U.S. perfidy, says it is ready to tear up all its "goodwill commitments" over nuclear inspections and finally renounce the non-proliferation treaty (NPT).

But South Korean officials said Beijing, Washington and Seoul were stepping up diplomatic efforts to avert a showdown.

In a terse statement issued overnight by the official Korean Central News Agency, the North Korean Foreign Ministry upped the stakes in its nuclear row with Washington.

If accused the Americans of renegeing on an end-of-year pledge to work for a peaceful end to the crisis, sparked by widespread fears that North Korea's hardline Communist leadership is secretly building nuclear weapons.

If Washington broke its promises, the statement said, the DPRK (North Korea) would no longer be bound by its promises.

These included "all the goodwill measures and commitments it has taken so far unilaterally... Such as the suspension of the effectuation of its announced withdrawal from

the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the freeze of all the nuclear activities..."

The statement angrily accused Washington of giving Pyongyang an ultimatum — accept the site inspection demands of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) if you want a resumption of face-to-face talks.

Accusing the Americans of "despicable and dangerous actions of perfidy", the North Korean statement said: "If the U.S. has no intention to hold any further round of talks, the DPRK, too, will have no intention to do so."

The U.N. nuclear watchdog says Pyongyang, which disclaims nuclear weapons ambitions, still refuses to allow inspection procedures vital to allow its experts to determine whether or not a secret weapons programme exists.

In just three weeks, these experts must report to the IAEA board of governors on their mission to find out if nuclear material has been diverted from civilian use to build arms.

If the IAEA advises it has been unable to do the job, North Korea could find itself

facing U.N. sanctions, a step it says would be an act of war.

But the South Korean Ambassador to China, Hwang Byung-Tae, said China was pressing North Korea to end the nuclear row through Vienna talks with the IAEA.

"China does not take North Korea's nuclear question so seriously. The Chinese view is that the North is engaged in an unprecedented dialogue with the West in any case and that if dialogue continues, the nuclear issue will be resolved," said Mr. Hwang, in Seoul for a meeting of ambassadors.

The attacks occurred as Mr. Adams, president of the Irish Republican Army's political wing, was attending a Northern Ireland conference in New York on a controversial last-minute visa agreed by Washington over London's protests.

The granting of the visa has been vehemently condemned by Ulster Unionists.

The IRA's political chief, vowing he wants to "take the gun out of Irish politics," broke a major barrier Monday when he arrived in the United States to bring his case to the American people for the first time.

Mr. Adams immediately launched into a series of TV appearances designed to win U.S. support and a public platform — something he was denied until recently in Ireland and is still forbidden in Britain where his "talking head" is banned on radio and television.

Within hours of arriving, he appeared on CNN's Larry King Show, the programme that regularly attracts presidents and prime ministers, offering to buy the host a pint of Guinness on Belfast's Falls Road. King told his audience that the show would not be broadcast on the cable network's European service because of the British ban on Mr. Adams.

The two leaders, who met at an Italian restaurant, reviewed developments in Moscow since the Jan. 10-11 NATO Brussels summit, in particular the retreat of reformers in Russia's new government.

Mr. Clinton's initial favouring of the Pacific rim as an essential area for U.S. foreign and trade policy when he took power last year aroused concern that Washington could be losing interest in Europe.

He said all sides were aware that the violence in the war-torn country did not originate with the Muslims and should realise the Islamic World is watching the savagery in Bosnia with mounting concern.

He said: "The long-term safeguarding of freedom, democracy and the free market in the formerly Communist part of Europe is a gigantic task. It is the major future task for you, for us and for our partners."

He urged America to main-

tain its world leadership role. "The world continues to pin its hopes and expectations upon you," he said.

At his news conference, Mr. Kohl, on a two-day visit to Washington, reaffirmed his country's cautious approach to outside military intervention in the Bosnian conflict, a policy echoed by Mr. Clinton.

Sending in outside ground forces would create "an incredible bloodbath," he said.

He said the priority was "first and foremost to maintain humanitarian assistance to the suffering people" in Bosnia. He and Mr. Clinton had agreed on the need to avoid action that would put the Bosnian Muslims under further pressure.

The president's trip to both West and East Europe earlier this month and his repeated commitment to helping reform in Russia have eased many worries, but European policymakers are still stressing how important they feel continued links are.

Mr. Kohl declined the role of mediator the United States and France, which has accused Washington of inaction over Bosnia. "The people we are talking about are all grown-ups, they do not need interpreters," he said.

Kohl: Bonn reached limit of aid to Russia

WASHINGTON (R) — Chancellor Helmut Kohl said Monday building democracy in Russia and Eastern Europe is the "major future task" facing the West but said Germany had given its full share of aid to Russia.

"We have come to the limit of what we can shoulder as a burden," Mr. Kohl, speaking through an interpreter, told a news conference.

He noted that Germany, for historical and a security reasons, had been by far the single biggest donor to Moscow to help reforms, but it was now up to other countries, especially the Europeans, to increase their contribution.

In a speech earlier to a meeting of U.S. governors, he said he and President Bill Clinton, who met for lunch, had agreed that "we must now combine our efforts in order to support Russia's progress and that of all the other reforming states towards stable democracy."

He said: "The long-term safeguarding of freedom, democracy and the free market in the formerly Communist part of Europe is a gigantic task. It is the major future task for you, for us and for our partners."

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order, prompting fears that they are ready for a major push in the fighting.

The United Nations has estimated that up to 5,000 regular Croatian army troops have crossed into Bosnia to help the Croats there, setting the stage for more fighting with the Muslims.

Croat and Muslim forces duelled with small arms and heavy machine guns in the Vitez area of central Bosnia Monday.

U.N. observers spotted helicopter activity by both sides in violation of the U.N. "no-fly" decree monitored by NATO jets.

A transport helicopter belonging to the Muslim-led Bosnian army was seen loading up and taking off near Novi Travnik while a Croat helicopter was observed hovering over a Vitez quarry used as a base to resupply Croat ground troops, Col. Aikman said.

Trucks carrying the world's largest mobile hospital began arriving in the Muslim sector of Mostar after being halted and checked twice by Bosnian Croats, U.N. officials said.

The first 19 containers of the massive field hospital, donated to the Bosnian government by a South African charity, passed the last Croat checkpoint south of Mostar. The remaining 19 containers are expected to be brought in Wednesday.

Asked if there was still light at the end of the tunnel, he said: "That would be an exaggerated statement."

Right-wing leader General Constant Viljoen, whose Afrikaner People's Front (AVF) is a key member of the Freedom Alliance, said later that if Afrikaners did not get a homeland

soon he doubted the April elections would be possible.

"Violence is already very high and if we don't get a Volkstaat (homeland) it will go through the ceiling," he said in a television interview.

More than 4,000 people died in political violence last year and political leaders have warned it could surge unless rightwingers were brought on board the transition to majority rule after more than three centuries of white domination.

ANC spokesman Carl Niehaus condemned Gen. Viljoen's comments Tuesday and said the ANC, which is widely

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Maier death casts shadow over Lillehammer preparations

LILLEHAMMER (AFP) — The death of Uli Maier in a World Cup race has highlighted the hidden dangers of Alpine skiing and cast a shadow over preparations for the Lillehammer Olympics in two weeks.

The 26-year-old Austrian was the first woman killed in top level skiing — which has claimed the lives of nine top men racers since 1959.

Her death from terrible internal injuries in the 100 kph fall changed expectations for Lillehammer from just a changing of the guard in the glamour sport.

Maier was one of several skiers — such as Marc Girardelli, Alberto Tomba, Guenther Mader, Vreni Schneider, Antje Wachter and Carole Merle — expected to challenge for honours in their final Olympics.

But the Maier tragedy at Garmisch Partenkirchen has forced a change of thought for many teams. The Austrian women's team were devastated by the loss of the former world giant slalom champion.

They will miss the final women's World Cup weekend at Sierra Nevada in Spain and will have a special training programme laid on for the Olympics.

Other teams were also stunned by the death. "Whenever anything like this happens you always think twice before setting off down a hill," said French teenager Melanie Snetter who followed Maier on the Garmisch Partenkirchen slope and finished second.

The emergence of new stars will now be imperative to ease the sadness at Lillehammer.

And the host country look set to lead the new generation of young turks. Everything points to 22-year-old Norwegian allrounder Kjetil-Andre Aamodt cleaning up in a brace of events.

He will be supported by downhiller Atle Skaardal and technical skiers Ole-Christian Furseth and Finn-Christian Jagge who could also win medals.

Norway's chance of a women's medal was dashed in December when Astrid Lodelund fell during a World Cup super-G Austria and took the right knee ligaments.

Canada seems set to re-establish its downhill tradition in the women's race. The Slovanes, whose best skiers have always been technical, are producing new stars like 21-year-old Jure Kosir.

Austria and Norway should dominate the skiing. Austria because skiing — despite the weekend death — is a national industry and Norway because they have wisely invested in their team to come good for the games.

Austria's Patrick Ortner is leading downhiller contender, Mader in the middle disciplines and Thomas Stangassinger in the slalom. Wachter will now backbone the women's team —



Ulrike Maier

Federation rejects blame for Maier's death

VIENNA (R) — The International Ski Federation (FIS) has rejected charges by the finance of Ulrike Maier that its officials were to blame for the accident which killed the Austrian skier in a World Cup downhill race Saturday.

FIS Director Gianfranco Kasper, appearing in an Austrian Television panel discussion Monday evening, said organisers did "everything humanly possible to ensure safety" on the Kandahar Piste at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Bavaria.

"We have a clear conscience," he said. "There is no patent formula for ruling out every kind of risk."

"I don't wish to sound callous but, as they say, the show must go on," he added.

German police are conducting an investigation, a routine procedure in cases of fatal accidents.

Hubert Schweighofer, the bereaved fiance and father of Maier's four-year-old daughter, appeared later on Austrian television and said: "The FIS is fully responsible."

Schweighofer, flanked by his lawyer, repeated his charge that Maier would have suffered no more than a bad fall, instead of a fatal broken neck, had her head not struck a wooden post driven into the piste.

He said the post, set up to hold a timing device, should never have been on the piste, especially at its narrowest point, and the protection around it was wholly inadequate.

He added bitterly that neither he nor the Maier family had received a single telephone call from "overpaid" FIS officials who were hundreds of miles away in Spain, preparing for next weekend's races, when they ought to have been ensuring safety at Garmisch.

And he vowed to sue the sport's controlling body for what he alleged was its careless approach to safety standards.

Maier said before starting that the piste was "brutally icy" and almost too dangerous to race.

After her horrific crash, the event continued, although the German doctor who attended her after she was taken by helicopter to an emergency clinic said: "She died immediately."

Schweighofer's lawyer, Harald Lettau, said there had clearly been a "crass error" up Garmisch officials in allowing the timing device to be placed where it was.

He said a race technical director who maintained there had always been such an installation at that point in the Kandahar run was provided wrong by simply viewing film of past races which showed no timing device near the post.

He added that race organisers had failed to take the precaution of sawing halfway through the wooden post at ground level, so that it would snap off harmlessly if a skier crashed into it.

Schweighofer said his legal action for negligence would be based on the precedent set by Canadian downhiller Brian Stensland who sued organisers following a crash at Kitzbuehel five years ago and won his case.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Lebanese scholar Boustani dead

BEIRUT (AP) — Fouad Efram Boustani, a prominent Lebanese scholar, died in hospital Tuesday, four weeks after suffering a heart attack, his family said. He was 89. Mr. Boustani had been in the intensive care unit at Beirut's Rizk Hospital and lapsed into coma two weeks ago. A writer, critic, researcher and historian, Mr. Boustani founded the Lebanese University, the country's biggest educational institution, in 1953. He became the publicly funded institution's first president. Born to a Maronite Catholic family in the Shouf mountain town of Deir Al Kamar, Mr. Boustani had a short political career during Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war. He was a member of the right-wing Lebanese Front for a few years before it broke up in the late 80s. Mr. Boustani had won awards for his work in education from the Lebanese government, the Vatican, France, Spain, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and Iran.

Clinton seeks \$1.2b to pay for peacekeeping

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton's administration asked Congress Monday for an additional \$1.2 billion for unexpected international peacekeeping costs. The funds are partly needed to pay for U.S. peacekeepers in Somalia until March 31, when the last U.S. troops are due to be withdrawn. The request was expected to win committee support as part of a bill sending relief funds to earthquake victims in California. The United States is participating in several U.N. operations, including relief flights over Bosnia-Herzegovina, a peacekeeping detachment in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia and a fleet in the Adriatic supporting Bosnian operations. However, Senator Bob Dole, a leading critic of the Clinton administration, said \$401 million had already been budgeted this year for peacekeeping. He proposed tougher congressional control over U.S. participation in peacekeeping missions.

Turks visit Iranian victims of air raid

NICOSIA (R) — A Turkish team investigating the reported deaths of Iranian villagers in air raids near the Iran-Iraq border visited victims in hospital on Tuesday and expressed their regret, the Iranian news agency IRNA said. IRNA said the delegation, headed by Oğur Dıngan, director general at the Turkish Foreign Ministry, visited a hospital in Iran's northwestern Azarbaijan province. "Talking to the victims the Turkish envoy expressed his government's deep regret over the incident," IRNA said. Turkey on Saturday denied its aircraft had killed Iranian citizens in air raids on rebel Kurds using northern Iraq as a guerrilla base.

Clinton gets 58 per cent approval rating

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Fifty-eight per cent of Americans approve of President Bill Clinton's performance, with most expressing trust and support for his policies, according to a poll published Tuesday. Fifty-three per cent of 1,013 adults polled Jan. 30 by CNN, USA Today and Gallup, approved of his economic policies, a marked improvement over the 46 per cent approval rating he received in a Jan. 17, 1993 survey. Forty-seven per cent gave him high marks for his get-tough approach to crime laid out in his state of the union speech last week, well above the 33 per cent approval rating from a year ago. The president made steady gains in most categories of the poll except in the area of defence, which slipped from 53 per cent to 50 per cent and foreign affairs from 54 per cent to 52 per cent.

Tehran paper says oil officials arrested

TEHRAN (R) — Several senior Iranian Oil Ministry officials have been arrested on alleged bribery charges, the Salam newspaper said Tuesday. It said ministry officials arrested in the oil-producing province of Khuzestan included the deputy chief for operations, the head of drilling and the head of the chemical department on alleged bribery charges and embezzlement of \$30 million. The newspaper did not say when the arrests took place. An Oil Ministry spokesman told Reuters: "We are investigating and at this time we neither approve nor deny the report." Salam quoted what it called an informed Oil Ministry source as saying "the case of embezzlement is true but there is no information on the amount of money involved, number or identity of those arrested."

Saudi royals have 'secret' telephone network

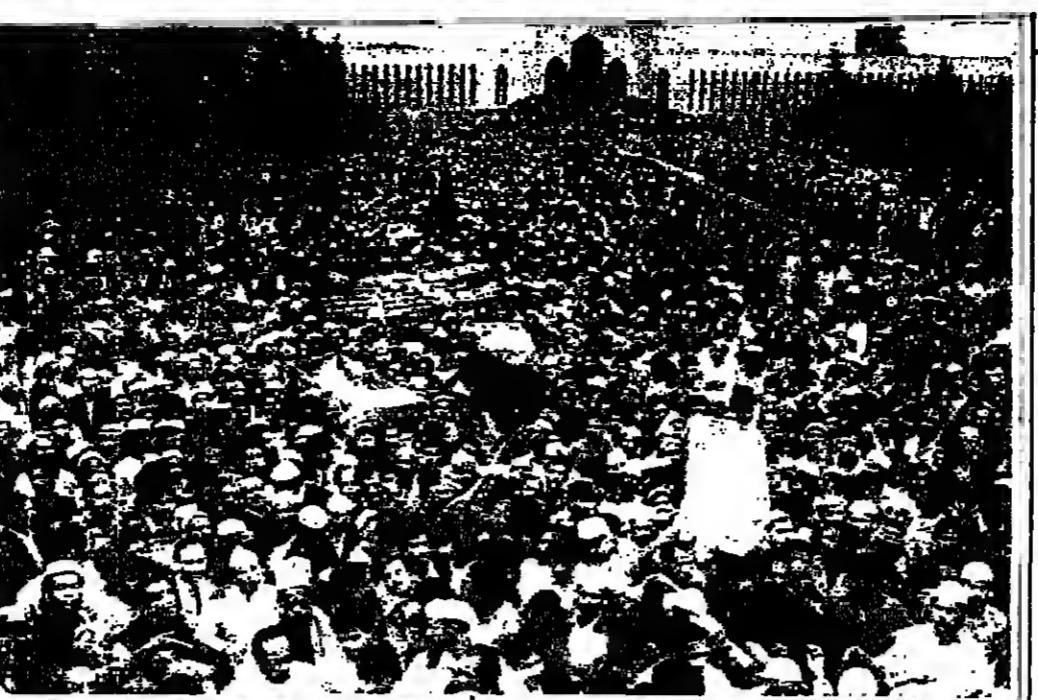
MUNICH (AFP) — Siemens has supplied the royal family of Saudi Arabia with a special digital mobile telephone network, a spokesman for the German firm said Tuesday. The network, currently comprising 10,000 lines, is reserved for use by the family of King Fahd, the spokesman said, confirming a report in the British Financial Times newspaper. The network uses the GSM standard adopted by European countries for the next generation of mobile phones and already in use in France, Scandinavia and Germany. According to the Times, the Saudi royal family ordered the system secretly without approval from the Saudi telecommunications authorities, amassing frequencies earmarked for the country's public telephone service. The Siemens spokesman refused to divulge the price paid for the system. The Times estimated that some \$40 million was paid. Germany's Bild newspaper reported Tuesday the price was 60 million marks (about \$34.5 million). Siemens has already installed GSM systems in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Morocco.

Indians concerned by attacks on Sikhs in Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — Three unexplained attacks on Sikhs, including two killings, have worried Kuwait's Indian community, Indian Ambassador Pren Singh said on Tuesday. Mr. Singh said he had conveyed the community's feelings in a meeting with senior Interior Ministry officials and was due to see Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah to discuss the incidents. "We are a little disturbed," Mr. Singh told Reuters. "This is in the realm of conjecture, but it may be some fringe group targeting our people. Perhaps it is that Sikhs are easily identified (by their turbans)." On Jan. 23 gunmen shot dead Sikh father-of-two Mammojan Singh Anand, aged about 50 and a Kuwait resident for 30 years. The gunmen in a car in the Salmiya area drew up behind a car carrying him and three other Indians, two of them Sikhs, and sprayed bullets at their vehicle before speeding off. In other incidents cited by the ambassador, on Dec. 31 a Sikh shop was burnt down, causing losses of about one million dinars (\$3.3 million), and on Nov. 3 a Sikh was found dead.

Envoy briefs Kuwait after Iraq trip

KUWAIT (R) — An Arab League envoy who recently visited Iraq to seek information on hundreds of Kuwaitis missing and believed held there said Baghdad had shown readiness to cooperate on the issue, the Kuwait News Agency reported. "He (envoy Mahyoubi Al Mahyoubi) noted that the Iraqi officials have shown readiness to cooperate with the league's efforts towards this humanitarian issue," the official agency reported. KUNA said the Arab League had provided Kuwait with a report on the outcome of Dr. Mahyoubi's 10-day visit late last month. Kuwait says 625 people, mostly Kuwaitis, detained during Iraq's seven-month occupation and the Gulf war that ended it are still held by Baghdad in defiance of U.N. ceasefire resolutions. Iraq has denied it still holds any such people.



MOURNING: Thousands of mourners Tuesday carry the coffins of six people killed during Bangladesh's first direct mayoral and city commissioner elections (AFP photo)

Clinton: Iraqi nuclear project out of business

WASHINGTON (Agencies)

— President Bill Clinton said Monday the Iraqi nuclear weapons programme was "out of business" for now, but the world had to keep watching because Iraq wanted to rebuild its weapons of mass destruction capability, especially nuclear weapons," Mr. Clinton said.

The president went through a long litany of examples of Iraq's non-compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions and defiance of the Gulf war coalition forces.

He said on Dec. 22, Iraqi military forces attacked a four-vehicle coalition military convoy near the Fayday checkpoint. It was the first time Iraqi forces had fired directly on coalition forces since the Gulf war.

"The U.N. Special Commission on Iraq and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have effectively put the Iraqi nuclear weapons programme out of business in the near term," Mr. Clinton's report, sent a letter to the leaders of the House of Representatives and Senate, said.

But he said the international community must continue its efforts to establish a long-term monitoring regime that was required by U.N. Security Council Resolution 715.

Iraq has said it is ready to comply, but it still must take "significant steps", the president said, including providing data about its weapons suppliers and accepting a monitoring programme for a sustained

period.

"Continued vigilance is necessary because we believe that Saddam Hussein is committed to rebuilding his weapons of mass destruction capability, especially nuclear weapons," Mr. Clinton said.

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He said on Dec. 22, Iraqi military forces attacked a four-vehicle coalition military convoy near the Fayday checkpoint. It was the first time Iraqi forces had fired directly on coalition forces since the Gulf war.

"We, along with the British and the French, issued a demand to the Iraqi government, warning Baghdad that a repetition of the incident would have consequences," Mr. Clinton said.

He said Iraq's use of aircraft against its population in the southern part of the country had stopped since the U.N. declared "no-fly" zones there, but that Iraqi forces had stepped up their use of land-based artillery to shell marsh villages. Iraq also continued to try to disrupt humanitarian aid to the people of northern Iraq.

Jordan awaits Yemeni team to finalise signing event plans

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan is awaiting the arrival of an official Yemeni delegation later this week to finalise plans for hosting the signing ceremony of a national reconciliation and political reform agreement among Yemeni leaders, informed sources said Tuesday.

They said the delegation would be headed by Deputy Prime Minister Mujahid Abu Shawab, who will convey a final decision on whether Yemeni leaders had accepted a Jordanian invitation to come to Amman and sign the reconciliation and reform agreement.

Feb. 6 had been set as a tentative date for the signing.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh and Vice-President Ali Salem Al Beedi have accepted in principle the invitation from His Majesty King Hussein, but other Yemeni politicians had been arguing that the signing of the accord should be held on Yemeni soil, sources in Sanaa said.

While President Saleh, a northern Yemeni leader, is particularly interested in travelling to Amman to sign the accord, Mr. Beedi, whose stronghold is in the south, appears to have left the decision to the mediating committee, they added.

Officials noted that if Amman were to host the ceremony, preparations would have to start immediately in

Meanwhile, Arab League Secretary-General Esmael Abdul Meguid is offering to host the signing at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, reports said.

Dr. Abdul Meguid telephoned both President Saleh in Sanaa, and Mr. Beedi in Aden to extend the invitation, the reports said.

Several Arab and non-Arab leaders, including King Hussein, were involved in the mediation efforts that produced the reconciliation and reform agreement to end a seven-month political crisis between President Saleh and Mr. Beedi.

A Yemeni committee of mediators drafted the accord and both the president and vice-president have accepted it as a blueprint for the future political and economic course for their country.

Some influential Yemeni political leaders are insisting that the signing of the accord takes place on Yemeni soil since it is a Yemeni national reconciliation and reform agreement, according to Yemeni sources.

The sources also said that the Yemeni leaders wanted to mark the signing of the accord as a national occasion attended by representatives of all Arab as well as friendly foreign countries.

Officials noted that if Amman were to host the ceremony, preparations would have to start immediately in

view of the expected large attendance.

Jordan has also offered its Armed Forces officers to supervise the merger of the armies of the former North and South Yemen. The two Yemens unified in May 1990, but the armies have not been incorporated together as one unit. And this had led to high tension in the run-up to the accord, with both sides accusing each other of threatening military moves.

On Tuesday, Reuters reported from Dubai that the southern army was sending more tanks to a vital oil province in what the news agency described as a signal of "continuing tension" between President Saleh and Mr. Beedi.

But the sources in Sanaa said the tank movements, as reported by travellers quoted in the report, were going on for several days and were not part of any possible confrontation.

Beedi contacts King

The Jordan News Agency: Petra, said Mr. Beedi telephoned King Hussein on Monday and discussed "Jordan's efforts to overcome the differences between the Yemeni parties in light of the (reconciliation and reform) agreement ... " and "Jordan's support for Yemen's democratic and unionist march." It did not elaborate.

Journalist shot dead in Algiers

not immediately available.

The attack occurred a day after Algeria's Defence Minister Lamine Zeroual, took office as president. He vowed to kill fighting militants while also offering a dialogue to end the insurgency.

Hours before the swearing-in ceremony, Rachid Tigrin, head of economic policy for the opposition Rally for Culture and Democracy, was killed by attackers who slit his throat outside his home, his family said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Mr. Tigrin's killing or the attack on the journalists. But they appeared to be part of the low-level civil war that has claimed 3,000 lives since an army coup stopped fundamentalists from winning multiparty legislative elections in January 1992.

A spokesman in exile for the Algerian fundamentalist move-

ment the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) said the movement had not yet taken a position on Mr. Zeroual.

Rabah Kebir, in remarks published in the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat Tuesday, said: "We cannot say that what happened (the appointment of Zeroual) is positive or negative. We are not concerned with personalities.

"What matters is Mr. Zeroual's subsequent policies. When those become clear, then we can judge."

On Sunday Mr. Kebir attacked the Algerian government, saying that it had no legitimacy and that its days were numbered.

An Algerian state-owned newspaper on Tuesday lashed out at Iran for "interference," apparently replying to Iran's criticism of President Zeroual.

Saudi Arabia defers \$9.2b U.S. arms payments

WASHINGTON (R) — Saudi Arabia and the United States have signed an agreement under which the Saudis will restructure \$9.2 billion in arms payments to five major U.S. companies, defence officials said.

The stretch-out deal could clear the financial road for a reported plan by Saudi Arabia, which has been hit by declining oil prices, to buy \$6 billion in commercial airliners from Boeing Co. and McDonnell Douglas Corp.

The U.S. Defence officials, who asked not to be identified, said the restructuring plan was signed Saturday by officials of the two governments and McDonnell Douglas Corp., Raytheon Co., General Dynamics Corp., FMC Corp. and General Motors Corp.

The \$9.2 billion in payments, previously scheduled over the next two years, are

part of some \$30 billion in U.S. arms that the Saudis have agreed to buy.

The defence officials said the plan will allow Saudi Arabia to ease its immediate burden of paying for jets, missiles, tanks, armoured troops carriers and other weapons without cancelling any of the planned purchases.

The deal chiefly affects a \$9 billion agreement by the Saudis to buy 72 McDonnell F-15 fighters. Instead of taking delivery of two of the jets a month beginning sometime next year, the Saudis would buy one a month, the officials said.

But Israel has also agreed in principle to buy 20 F-15 jets from McDonnell and that could make up for any slack in production which might be threatened by Saturday's agreement, the officials said.

Defence industry officials

told Reuters privately they believed the rescheduling could clean the way for Saudi purchases of about \$6 billion in commercial airliners from Boeing and McDonnell.

According to reports, Saudi Arabia wants to buy 60 commercial airliners in a plan that has also drawn strong interest from Europe's Airbus Industrie.

The Wall Street Journal reported Monday that the arms restructuring and the airliner plan were not connected, but quoted a source close to both negotiations as saying that the arms deal would make it easier for the Saudis to soon place the airliner order.

Under the payment stretch-out deal, defence officials said, the Saudis would cut back their total cash payments to the five defence contractors to \$1.5 billion annually over the next two years.

The remaining \$6 billion in payments originally scheduled for the two years would be covered by loan guarantees by the Saudi government.

The Journal reported that the American firms would form a new corporation to take out the loans so that the debt would not show up on either Saudi books or the balance sheets of the five companies.

Officials of Raytheon and FMC said Monday they would feel no major affect from the restructuring deal. "Our work on programmes continues on track," said Raytheon in a statement, but declined further comment.

FMC said Saudi requirements on its contract to deliver 400 Bradley fighting vehicles "remains unchanged," an FMC spokesman said. The firm felt that the oil income prob-

lem was "a short-term issue" for Saudi Arabia.

In Riyadh, meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's King Fahd discussed the planned cuts in expenditure to absorb weak oil prices at the weekly cabinet meeting.

"King Fahd applauded the wise and accurate steps undertaken for reducing expenditure with the aim of achieving the targeted balance in the upcoming years, God willing," the cabinet statement, carried by the official Saudi Press Agency, said.

Arab diplomatic sources earlier said that the king, who is also prime minister, had discussed with Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Washington Prince Bandar the plan to cut Riyadh's annual cash commitments for the purchase of the American arms.

COLUMN 8

Princess Masako pregnant... maybe

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's imperial family is maintaining a royal silence on mounting speculation that Princess Masako, the brilliant diplomat who married the heir to the throne last year, is pregnant. For weeks, gossipy columnists have stoked rumours concerning Princess Masako's condition, undaunted by the wall of stony silence from the imperial household. In its latest edition, the weekly magazine Women claims to have identified a trend in royal cover-ups of pregnancies, drawing the inevitable conclusion that the princess will deliver an heir before the year is out. "A cold or a pregnancy?" asked the magazine, referring to a health problem that has kept the princess out of the public eye so far this year. The magazine was swift to point out that the imperial household stage-managed a cover-up in 1991 when Princess Kiko, wife of Prince Aya, was pregnant. Princess Kiko had a "cold," the household said, when she missed foreign trips and royal duties. The precedent was set a generation ago when the imperial court cloaked the fact that Princess Michiko, now the empress, was expecting her first child in 1959. The same imperial "cold" has kept Princess Masako, 30, away from several public engagements since the beginning of the year, the magazine said. Though a commoner, Princess Masako, daughter of a diplomat and herself a promising member of the diplomatic corps, married Prince Naruhito in June last year.

We, along with the British and the French, issued a demand to the Iraqi government, warning Baghdad that a repetition of the incident would have consequences," Mr. Clinton said.

He said Iraq's use of aircraft against its population in the southern part of the country had stopped since the U.N. declared "no-fly" zones there, but that Iraqi forces had stepped up their use of land-based artillery to shell marsh villages.

But he said the international community must continue its efforts to establish a long-term monitoring regime that was required by U.N. Security Council Resolution 715.

Iraq has said it is ready to comply, but it still must take "significant steps", the president said, including providing data about its weapons suppliers and accepting a monitoring programme for a sustained

Aided militia to hold fire despite U.S. 'attack'

representatives, as "outrageous and unacceptable."

The faction urged "the Somali people to continue observing the ceasefire" despite what it termed an unprovoked American attack that killed at least eight Somalis.

In a statement released in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, where General Aided is reportedly holding talks with rival faction leaders, bis Somali National Alliance (SNA) said at least 16 people had been killed and 14 wounded in the fire fight between U.S. troops and Somali gunmen in Mogadishu on Monday.

At least eight people were killed in the brief battle and 25 injured, including women and children